

SPSO decision report

Case: 201301511, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

For three years, Mr C's business premises had operated without paying for water and drainage services because he had not identified a service provider and set up an account. When, after an audit, Business Stream became aware that the property was occupied, they issued Mr C with invoices for water and drainage services for the period of his occupation. Mr C asked to pay the bill in instalments. He then complained that Business Stream would not accept his offer and, when he found that he could not meet the payment plan he had agreed, unreasonably refused to agree to renegotiate it. He also complained that: Business Stream were unreasonable in not agreeing to revise their charges after he asked for a reassessment following the fitting of a water meter; that their charges did not reflect the probable usage; and that they had unreasonably refused to agree to take into account that his business premises were closed when there was a leak from an upstairs property, and a flood in his premises.

We did not uphold Mr C's complaints. Our investigation found that when Mr C had not made payment as promised, Business Stream had told him that they were prepared to renegotiate his payment plan to extend the time for payment to 18 months, but he had not responded to this offer. They had told Mr C that they could not apply a retrospective reassessment of their charges, and this is consistent with our understanding of their process. Having considered their policy on what should happen when business premises are closed, we were also satisfied that Business Stream dealt with Mr C's request consistently under the relevant policy.